

# THE DIAMOND CIPHER

## A BASEBALL ROMANCE

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### SYNOPSIS.

**CHAPTER I.**—Secret Service Chief Wilkins, puzzled over the theft of the Government's cipher, calls to his aid Detective Pinkwell. They think they have discovered a new cipher, when the office boy, Brockett, tells them it's "The Diamond Cipher" and starts for the ball park.

**CHAPTER II.**—Brockett, Chula Lon Kan, a Siamese, Ramon Solano, a Cuban, together with some twenty other youngsters practice baseball playing until dark. One of Wilkins' stenographers is seen to pass a paper to mysterious stranger.

**CHAPTER III.**—As outcome of Brockett's cipher, the ball player and Solano are engaged by government for mysterious mission. Yamamoto, mysterious Jap, calls on Brockett.

**CHAPTER IV.**—Brockett falls into Yamamoto's trap, a fight follows. Brockett coming out on top; Messenger McKane coming to rescue.

**CHAPTER V.**—McKane was bearer of the mysterious cipher; is also a ball player.

**CHAPTER VI.**—Yamamoto returns to headquarters and reports his failure to obtain the cipher to Baron Zollern; Miss Lawson, the stenographer, also reports to the Baron.

**CHAPTER VII.**—Brockett and Solano have encounter with the Baron in which the latter comes out second best.

**CHAPTER VIII.**—Brockett and Solano arrive in Jersey City; make appointment to meet McGinnity, the "Iron Man," baseball manager.

**CHAPTER IX.**—Brockett and Solano arrive in New York and run into a Chinese Tong war; rescued by a white man.

**CHAPTER X.**—The place of refuge found to be a trap; find themselves prisoners of Yamamoto. Kelly to rescue, mingles Jap out of \$10,000.

**CHAPTER XI.**—Kelly turns the money over to Brockett.

**CHAPTER XII.**—Brockett and Solano have encounter with tough gang, but are protected by Kelly's men.

**CHAPTER XIII.**—On sleeper Cleveland-bound; the Baron detected in act of rifling Solano's berth, jumps from train.

**CHAPTER XIV.**—At Detroit the messengers go to ball game, receive hieroglyphs in mysterious manner and depart for Chicago.

**CHAPTER XV.**—Arriving in Chicago, the messengers are robbed by a "transom thief;" the Baron again appears.

**CHAPTER XVI.**—The Baron offers to assist in recovering the stolen papers.

No message had been handed them all day, and they had received no sign of any character, although ears and eyes had been alert in eager expectation of a slip of paper quickly passed amid the hurrying crowds. It seemed evident, therefore, that they would have to wait over for at least another day, and rest had grown insistently imperative. They selected a downtown hotel, not one of the largest caravansaries, but a small, quiet-looking place, engaged a room and went to bed without delay. Recent experiences, however, had taught them a little caution. Reconnoitering all angles and appurtenances of their room, they soon convinced themselves that there was no chance for an intruder to enter by way of a window. They were on the fourth floor, and the only windows in the room looked down upon a sheer drop to the street below. Not even a fire-escape was within close reach; a glass door, twenty feet farther down the hall, bore the red-lettered inscriptions which told of exit to safety in case of a sudden blaze. The door of the room was locked and a chair braced against it, with its top under the knob, where it would rattle if anyone became too busy on the farther side, and the transom was tightly secured. These simple precautions taken, the boys climbed into bed; need of sleep soon impressed itself upon them, and within half an hour both were dead to the world and all its doings.

Daylight was just stealing into the room when Brockett woke, yawned, turned over and stared half-drowsily at the door. The door was still shut; the chair was still against the knob, and Brockett, smiling sleepily, was closing his eyes once more when he saw his coat, which had been draped around the back of another chair, seemingly taking wings and gaining animation. The coat rose, disengaged itself from the chair, and floated lightly through the air, navigating the upper strata of the atmosphere like a perfected biplane. It halted suddenly at the level of the transom, and the bewildered Brockett saw a lean brown hand clutching the garment, while another lean brown hand vanished into

the inner recesses of the pockets. And then Brockett, with one wild yell, flung himself out of bed, charged across the room, and tore madly at the chair he had himself placed against the knob as additional protection. His coat fell squarely on his head as he clawed at the chair, blinding him for a moment; the chair was clumsy and hard to handle, the lock stuck, gripped the key like a thing of malice and hostile wishes, and when Brockett, clad only in the chaste garb of slumber, finally burst into the hall, with Solano at his heels, not a soul was visible. Retreating hurriedly to the room, Brockett caught up his coat and ran a trembling hand into the pockets. They were empty—secret messages and cipher, all were gone.

Stopping only to draw on a few necessary garments, the boys, white-faced, almost sobbing, flung themselves into the hall, and sprinted towards the elevator. As they rushed frantically forward, they smashed heavily into a large, middle-aged gentleman who was just turning in from a cross-hall. The large, middle-aged man, with surprising quickness and dexterity, harpooned each of them with a huge and mighty hand, and, smiling amiably, held them unwilling prisoners.

"Vy in sooch a hurry, mein young frents?" laughingly spoke the Baron Zollern.

### CHAPTER XVI.

Baron Zollern had been a mighty man at home in Germany. Stories of his strength and his tremendous deeds were table-talk from Mainz to Danzig, and it was even said that his great countryman, Eugene Sandow, would have found it no easy task to cope with the Baron in physical achievement. The Baron, however, was now in the position of a man who tries to hold a wildcat with each hand, and even his strength might have proved insufficient to restrain the kicking, slugging captives had not half a dozen husky fellows—Germans, every one of them—sprung up as if by magic all around the trio. Surrounded and outnumbered, the boys had sense enough to quit fighting, and stood gasping, disheveled, glaring at the Baron and his retinue. Zollern, still smiling, in spite of painful bruises on shins and countenance, eyed the prisoners for a moment and then spoke in a tone of the utmost friendship and good-humor.

"Vy so unruly, young chentlemen? Vat haf I efer done dot you should be so abusif?"

"You have done enough," snapped Brockett, "to get yourself put away for years to come—you have proved yourself a German spy, and even this country doesn't deal very gently with that kind of yellow dogs. Give me back my messages, and let me go, or you'll know what a jail looks like from the inside."

Baron Zollern laughed amusedly.

"How could I," he gurgled, "gif you back your documents ven I haf dem not got meinself as yet? I expect dot I vill haf dem in a very few minids, und den ve vill see about gifting dem back alretty. At present, I half dem not, so vy such excitations?"

"You are a liar," snarled Solano. "The papers were stolen not five minutes ago, and you have them in your pocket now."

"No, no, aber nit," chuckled the Baron. "Gif me time. De bapers vill be here, in mein own hiddle hand, in a few minids, but vy andicabate? Two off you men search de clodings of dese young men, und bring me vat-effer documents dere may be concealed dereln."

"You don't need to search," said Brockett. "Some of your thieves took the papers from my coat a few minutes ago. Fished for them over the transom, and got them. It was a nice trick—one I suppose I ought to give you credit for."

"Fished for dem? Ofer de transom?" queried the Baron. "No indeet. Dot iss not de vay I intendet to acquire dese documents. Not at all. It vos my intenchuns to make you de



THEY SMASHED HEAVILY INTO A LARGE, MIDDLE-AGED GENTLEMAN.

dem ofer de transom? Vat craciness iss disa, my frendt?"

Zollern's men emerged from the room, bearing whatever clothing Brockett and Solano had left behind. They reported that nothing of any interest had been found, and a quick search of the prisoners turned up no papers of any special value. Baron Zollern's face wore a bewildered look, and began to cloud portentously as he turned upon his captives.

"You haf hidden de bapers," he purred, ominously. "Berhaps ve can find vays und means to induce you to discover dem?"

"I have told you, you German sneak-thief," snarled Brockett, "how the papers were stolen. Ask your men which one of them went fishing through the transom, and you will have the one who got the messages."

Baron Zollern walked over to the door of the room where the boys had slept. He studied the panels, the floor, the carpet leading from the doorway. He dragged a chair to the door, stood upon it, and examined the transom. Then he returned to the wondering group again, his face a strange commingling of purple, white and crimson.

"It iss as you haf said," he rumbled, half-chokingly. "Somebody, climbing on a chair, fished ofer dot transom. Let me see your coat. Ah—ya, ya, dere iss de blace vere a hook caught in de fabric. You haf told de truth. You vere robbed by a skilful fisherman, mit a line und hook, oberated drough de transom. It vos clefer work."

"Some one of your people," exclaimed Solano. "Why don't you get the papers from him, if you are so wild about them?"

The Baron turned his mottled, anguished face upon the speaker. "Young chentlemen," he cried, raising his right hand on high, "as dere iss a Gott, as I lofe und honor de Cherman kaiser, no man off mein hass done disting. De drick hass been bulled off by somevon else, somevon to whom dese babers vas as valuable as to me or you. Ve haf both been fooled, und I am de bigger fool off two fools."

There was no mistaking the ring of honesty in the German's voice. There was no mistaking the look upon his



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horror-stricken visage. He had been baffled at his own game, and, in the very trap he had prepared, had been beaten to the prize by some unknown scoundrel. Brockett, heartsick and desperate, could almost sympathize, in the midst of his own troubles, with the disappointed Teuton. For several minutes Baron Zollern, clenching and unclenching his hands, the mottled colors playing back and forth across his face, leaned heavily against the wall. Then he shook himself together, and forced a grim smile to his lips.

"I blanned it vell, young chentlemen," said he. "You vunder how it vos dot I could do such tings in dis hotel? Dot vos easy—but vearvully exbensive. Last night, before you had been in de blace an hour, I bought de hotel. Made de acquaintance off de brobrieter. Told him I must make an investment, must make it, Himmel, so sudden! Asked him de brice off de hotel. Ach, but he vos, mit himself, mosd liberal! Den und dere I laid down de money, de grip American bills; vitin half an hour I vos in full bossession off de house, vit some faithful employes at my gommmand. Id vos de quickest dransaction in hotel broberties on record, ya? Und id vos all for de good burbose—and id vos all vasted."

"Can't say we are sorry for your troubles," spoke up Solano. "The question is—what are you going to do with us?"

Baron Zollern shrugged his wide shoulders. "I belief," said he, "dot ve must come to a gombromise. You haf had your documents. I haf not secured dem. 'Ve are both in, vot you call id—a dell of a fix."

"In all probability," cut in Brockett, "your dear friend, Yamamoto, has the papers now."

"If so," sighed Baron Zollern, "dot does me no goot—absoludely no goot. Mein young frents, nations change deir alliances even as men change

dem. Herr Yamamoto und meinself haf no longer indereeds in gommmon. To him, your documents are off exceeding value—and to me as vell—aber, nelder off us now wishes to share dem mit de oder."

"All of which," said Ramon Solano, "has no bearing on that question—what are you going to do with us?"

Baron Zollern debated, interiorly, for five minutes before he spoke.

"Young chentlemen," said he, "I belief dot I can gif you your liberty mitout de leasd gombunchuns. Under de circumstances, you vill hardly care to tell about de alleched robbery of your bapers, nor, in any case, to charge id to me. Moreofer, if I turn you loose, you vill, mitout a doubt, do your utmost to recover your documents. Dot vill gif me, bossibly, an oder chance to dake dem away from you. I vill release you. Ve vill both start de hunt for de stolen bapers—and may de besd hunter vin! In broof off de good vill I bear you, de moneys dot you paid for your room shall be gifen back to you. Vll you also do me de honor to dake breakfast mit me in mein new hotel?"

### CHAPTER XVII.

"I thought," said Solano, as the unhappy adventurers walked mournfully through the Chicago streets, "that you had your messages, your money, and everything else of any special value in a leather belt that you wore next to your skin?"

"I certainly did," sighed Brockett, despondently, "but the belt had chafed my skin. I took it off last night while I gave myself a rubdown, and when I went to bed I tucked it into the inside pocket of my coat. Just forced it on the thief, as you might say. He's got the goods; his government will have them as quickly as he can turn them over—and I suppose I might as well try to locate a position of some kind here in Chicago. I haven't the nerve to go back to Washington after this. The chief might not even say a word about it, but I'd be set down as a rank failure in his mind forever."

"Why give up so soon?" the Cuban said encouragingly. "Let's make one last effort to get back the letters. Luck has broken wonderfully well for us so far along the road—it might stick by us now."

"I'll do anything that you suggest," Brockett acquiesced, "but the chances are about a million to one against us. What course would offer any possibilities?"

"We might report the theft to police headquarters, simply stating that you had lost a leather money-belt, naming the amount of currency, and saying nothing as to the papers or letters."

"Description of thief," dolefully remarked Brockett, "a man who had a brown hand. That was about all I saw of him. It might have been either Yamamoto or Aguilar, or a countryman of either one. Can we have every Jap and Filipino in Chicago rounded up?"

Debating and discussing various ideas, none of them seeming to offer much hope, the boys walked aimlessly along, killing time till the morning was almost gone. Three times they passed Japanese gentlemen, dressty, smiling, bland of face and innocent in personality. Each of these sons of Nippon must have wondered, afterward, why the young white devils peered so sharply, almost savagely, into their countenances, but the quick inspections brought no comfort—none of them had the least likeness to Mr. Yamamoto. Pacing onward in this desultory, fruitless fashion, the baffled messengers turned into Chicago's Chinatown, and hurried out of it again. All Chinatowns are twinlike in their buildings, sounds and odors, and the memory of recent experiences in Doyers street did not give the boys any special desire to linger in the Chicago colony.

Towards noon they found themselves in a district as intensely black in population as Hayti or Mashonaland—a region that might have been interesting to them under ordinary circumstances, but which was now anything but attractive to the heartsick adventurers. They walked wearily along, cleared, as they thought, the boundaries of the black belt, and entered an unpretentious restaurant where they could at least talk over their unpleasant situation. They had begun a half-hearted lunch before they noticed that the other patrons of the place were all brunettes, of various shades between lampblack and light saddle-color, but the discovery did not worry them. In their state of mind they would hardly have raised objections if they had been seated at the same table with a band of gorillas.

At the next table sat a bulky black woman, whose billowy figure was draped in most of the colors of the rainbow, and who fended off the inquiries of the dusky waiter by explaining that she was "waitin' fo' a gentleman." The "gentleman" came in a moment later, an proved to be a colored man of gigantic stature—such magnitude of person that the large negress herself was dwarfed before him. This mammoth Zulu settled himself comfortably, grinned delight-

edly at the woman, and summoned the waiter with a lordly wave of his broad black hand.

"That fellow is a twin to the one who handed us the message in De-



THAT FELLOW IS A TWIN TO THE MAN WHO HANDED US THE MESSAGE IN DETROIT.

troit," whispered Brockett. "If he were only uniformed in the same sort of giddy costume, you couldn't tell them apart."

"I wouldn't have believed," Solano returned, "that there could be two black men as big as those, but here's the evidence before us. What's the use of raising white hopes if the black ones grow as large as this monster?"

The great black man spoke chucklingly to his "lady friend," and his words were wafted to the astounded ears of the boys five feet away.

"Ah say, hon," began the big fellow, "Ah's suah got a 'prise fo' yo. When Ah come in from Detroit yesterday"—the listeners almost toppled over their chairs in their astonishment—"Ah went right up to de ole hotel whar Ah wohked las' winteh. Got a job as pochteh quick. Dey allus liked Big Sam 'round dehe, hee hee! But de job didn't las' long. Las' night a big Dutchman, dat suah looked up ready money, done buy de hotel, an' gib us all one houb's notice to git out. Said he had people of his own dat he'd put in to do de work. He done paid me fo' de whole week, so Ah had no kick comin'."

"Yo' suttinly am lucky, Sam," commented the billowy black lady.

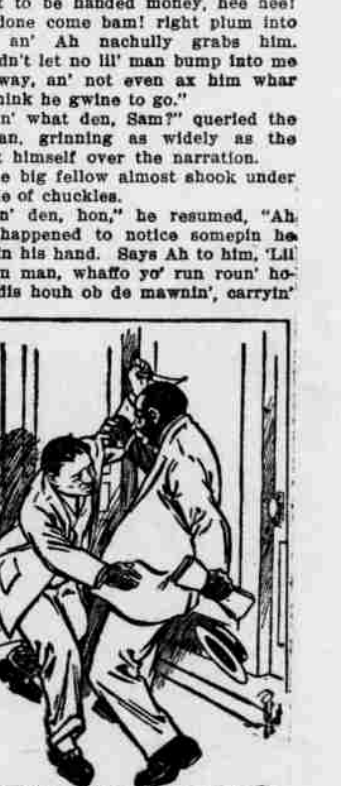
"Ah, hon, dat ain't nuffin," laughed the big fellow. "Jes' yo' wait till Ah done tell yo' eberyting! Ah didn't feel like goin' out huntin' no place to sleep, so Ah simply slips out, slips in agin—de Dutch pussen was too busy to notice anybody comin' or goin'—an' picks out an empty room dat Ah knowed of on de fouthth flooh. Ah gets up good an' eahly, an' stahts down de hall, real quiet-like, when what should come bumpin' into me, hon, but a man. A lil bit of a man, hon—lil brown man, jes' like a Chinaman, an' in an awful hurry. Hones', baby, dat lil man musta had a 'gage-ment to be handed money, hee hee! He done come bam! right plum into me, an' Ah nachully grabs him. Couldn't let no lil' man bump into me dataway, an' not even ax him whar he think he gwine to go."

"An' what den, Sam?" queried the woman, grinning as widely as the giant himself over the narration.

The big fellow almost shook under a gale of chuckles.

"An' den, hon," he resumed, "Ah jes' happened to notice somepin he had in his hand. Says Ah to him, 'Lil brown man, whafte yo' run roun' hotels dis houb ob de mawnin', carryin' a thing like dat? An' jes' den Ah heahs all sohts of noises roun' de tuhn of de hall, an' Ah sees, right quick, dat dis lil man mus' be some-ways disponsible fo' all dese excit-ments. Ah makes one grab fo' de thing he has in his hand, an' de lil debbil try to stick me wiv a jabknife. Think of it, hon—tried to stick me, jus' same Ah was a pig!"

To be continued



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very fair offer for de bapers. If you vos so insensate as to refuse, den I could take dem forcibly—but fish for